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ABSTRACT

The effect of children on adult language has only recently received serious consideration in the fields of linguistics, psychology, education, pediatrics and anthropology, although the importance of parental behavior for the language development of the child is universally recognized. This paper presents a review of the literature on children's verbal and non-verbal behavior, dating from the early 40's to the present. A brief critical reaction is given in each review indicating the specific contribution of each study. A bibliography is appended. (AMH)

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The influence of the child's communicative style on the conversational behavior of the adult

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PART I: VERBAL BEHAVIOR

The importance of parental behavior for the language development of the child is universally recognized. A summary on various educational programs to foster parental involvement was published in Holland (von Raffler-Engel 1975). But while the influence of adults on child language is a widely researched area, the effect of children on adult language has only recently received serious consideration in the fields of linguistics, psychology, education, pediatrics, and anthropology. In the psychological literature dating from before the seventies, the effect of children on adult language usually has to be inferred from among the extra linguistic influences since language, in this context, is not specifically designated.

In 1967 L. M. Stolz conducted a study concerned with influences on child-rearing behavior. Stolz listed nine characteristics of children which she found to influence adult behavior; and these included characteristics such as the level of maturity, the motivations, the abilities or lack of abilities, and the temporary condition of the child (i.e. tired, hungry, ill). Although Stolz does not discuss the idea of children affecting adult language, she did introduce the general concept that children influence adults to a wide public. "Every parent in this study was influenced by his children" (Stolz 1967:175). The work of Osofsky (Osofsky and Oldfield 1971, Osofsky and O'Connell 1972) also deals with children's effects on parental behavior, but language behavior is not their main concern.

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In the articles written by linguists, language is, of course, the prime concern; but here one has to infer to what extent the child has actually exerted his influence on the adult. The earliest mention of a specific feature "where the language of the child has influenced the language of the adult" is from Italian (von Raffler-Engel 1964:85-86). A one year old child shortened the family dog's name from "Ettore" (Hector) to "Etti." Afterwards, the parents also called the dog Etti, demonstrating the influence of the child on adult language in a naming process.

In recent years, the effect of children on adult language has gradually developed into an important research area; especially in the last year many studies were published concerning this topic. Nevertheless, the information has not been organized into one book which devotes itself entirely to the topic. While a few books dealing with child effects on adults have been written, none of them go into great detail on the effect of children on adult language.

A literature search by Mrs. Anne Stewart, director of the Collection of Books on Children at the library of George Peabody College for Teachers, concluded that no book is available, as of now, which deals specifically with the influence on first language acquisition on the adaptive mode of the adult interactant to the child's conversational behavior.

One of the earliest studies that implied the influence of children on adult verbal behavior was conducted by Landreth, Gardner, Eckhardt and Prugh in 1943. More smiling and pantomine was observed in nursery school teachers' communication with the younger children than with the older ones; thus age seemed to be the critical factor in the alteration of verbal behavior. In 1964 Kelkar described how Indian baby nurses addressed their higher status charges according to the caste rules of the time. The nurses were not directly influenced by the behavior of the children, but by their image of these children to whom certain forms of

address were due. In that same year appeared Ferguson's (1964) celebrated Baby talk in six languages, which followed his Arabic baby talk of 1956. The author brings out the social usages in talking with children, but does not deal explicitly with the child as an active influence on the language of his care-giver. Avram (1967) offers a rich description of adult baby talk in Roumanian and even states that "the adult adopts his language to the child in conversation," but, again, does not give any specific instance of interactional adaptation.

In 1970 LeMasters discussed what happens to parents in the child-rearing process in his book, Parents in Modern America. He does not discuss any aspect of the child affecting the verbal behavior of adults, which shows that this area failed at this time to receive recognition as a part of the child-rearing process. In the same year von Raffler-Engel (1970) collected two audio tapes, each representing an hour of spontaneous dinner conversation of a French Canadian mother in Hull, Quebec, with her children of varying ages and a female dinner guest acting as a control for adult language. From a transcript of these tapes, without indication of who the speakers were, it can be inferred who was the mother and who was the guest and the age of the child spoken to.

A study concerning fathers' verbal interaction with infants was conducted by Rebelsky and Hanks in 1971. They found that fathers talk infrequently to infants in the first three months of life. Also, Rebelsky and Hanks noted that the "fathers of female infants verbalize more during caretaking activities than do fathers of male infants" (1971:67). The experimenters proposed that the father may be reacting to a preconceived paternal role; that is, "fathers may perceive the role of father-of-daughter as a more nuturant, verbal role than the role of father-of-son" (1971:67). Thus, sex of the child seemed to affect the verbal behavior of the male parent in this study.

Catherine Snow has conducted several studies concerning the influence of children on adult language. In 1971 Snow found that when middle class mothers spoke to two-year-olds, their speech was simpler and more redundant than when they spoke to ten-year-olds. Snow also noted that the presence of the child was influential in altering the mothers' speech since the mothers' did not change their speech as much when talking to two-year-olds whose behavior they could not observe. Furthermore, Snow found that children did not attend as well to unmodified speech; therefore, "these responses to unmodified speech might be the means by which children elicit speech modifications from adult speakers." (1971: 3045). Thus, Snow's results indicate that age and the child's attentiveness influenced the mothers' speech.

Broen (1971) also discovered that the age of the child affected the mothers' speech. She taped the speech of ten mothers with their young child (18-26 months old), their older child (2-4 years old), and with an adult. "While always remaining grammatically correct, the mothers' speech changed with the different age of the speech partner." The following factors were affected: speech content, sentence type, sentence structure, range of vocabulary, rapidity of speech, pauses, and disfluencies. A slower speech rate, a restricted vocabulary, and a restricted set of sentences were used by mothers with very young children. Broen found that "sentence boundaries were well marked by pauses and there was little 'false' information in the form of broken sentences, disfluences, or inappropriate pauses."

In 1973 Phillips conducted a study concerning the syntax and vocabulary of mothers' speech to young children and found that young children were spoken to with a less varied and more concrete vocabulary. She concluded that "the mother adjusts her speech complexity to the developmental level of the child (1973:185).

The Effect of the Infant on its Caregiver (Lewis and Rosenblum) which was published in 1974, contained only a few articles concerning the effect of children

on adult language. Korner (1974) in a chapter in that book reviewed a couple of studies in which the sex of the child affected maternal language. Thoman, Leiderman and Olson (1972) found that "primiparous mothers talked to and smiled at their baby girls significantly more during feeding than they did with boys." (Korner 1974:110). Korner also mentioned a study by Moss and Robson (1969) in which mothers were more likely to respond to the fretting of 3-month-old female infants by talking, looking, and offering a pacifier, while the baby boys were usually held close or were offered some distraction. Thus, in these two studies the sex of the infant exerted an influence on the maternal speech.

In 1974 a very important article appeared by Moerk showing that mothers proved to be highly sensitive to the level of the language capacities of their children changing the syntactical forms as well as the contents of their message, depending on the child's language skill. In that same year Stern (1974) studied mothers and their 3-to-4-month-old infants at play and found changes in several of the mothers' speech elements. The range of pitch was expanded, the range of loudness showed alterations, and rhythm and stress differed from adult patterns. Stern proposes that during baby talk, "mothers slow down speech elements to more closely match the infant's perceptual capabilities and speech production abilities." (1974:192).

Harper (1975) divided an article entitled "Offspring Effects" into three sections, and these included "Effects on the Individual Parent," "Relationships of the Parents to the Culture at Large," and "Effects of the Young on Culture." Included in the first part was the subsection, "Communicative Behavior," in which Harper reviewed several studies that support the idea that a child affects parental speech patterns. The most important studies reviewed by Harper were mentioned above in the present paper (Rebelsky and Hanks, 1971; Phillips, 1973; Landreth et al,1943).

Slobin (1975) discusses how parents in languages with relatively free word

order such as Finnish, Turkish, and Estonian, alter the word order in an attempt to bring it closer to the child's natural sequence.

In a study of a child from birth to twenty months, Braunwald (1976) "defines the effects of maternal behavior and speech in relationship to the child's initial comprehension and production of language" (1976:28). The study began when Laura, the second child of professional parents, was ten days old. At 12-16 months, the period for the acquisition of symbols, Braunwald noted that there was a continuous process of accommodation between Laura and her mother. The mother modified her language and behavior in the following two ways: she labelled Laura's environment, and she relied upon verbal rather than totally physical intervention in organizing Laura's activities. At the beginning of this period, the mother would modify her speech when she wanted to prevent any misunderstanding. For example, Laura and her mother were in the kitchen when Laura said "Cookie." Her mother replied, "No cookie. Cookie bye-bye." "Laura's mother naturally and unconsciously adjusted her language to minimal utterances in her essential verbal transactions with Laura during this period (1976:40). In the 16-20 month period, the mother's speech contained syntax which Laura indicated that she understood by her verbal and behavioral responses. Braunwald noted that natural conversational responses demonstrated that the mother adjusted her language and behavior according to the new skills acquired by Laura. Although Braunwald conducted this study in order to learn what maternal behavior and language was beneficial to the child for language acquisition, she found also how the child influenced maternal speech. More specifically, Braunwald noted that the mother depended heavily upon the child's behavioral responses to determine if the child had understood her utterances. Thus, the child's communicative abilities played a significant role in modifying the mother's language.

Harkness (1976) conducted a study concerning cultural variations in maternal language. Differing from American mothers, Harkness found that Guatemalan mothers used an extremely fast, monotonic style when speaking to their young child. "Frequently, a child would respond by saying, 'Hm'? The mother would then repeat her utterance, usually without variation, as many times as demanded." (1976:496). Also, mothers did not change their intonation and stress patterns, nor did they use shorter sentences or simplified syntax. Consequently, Harkness demonstrated that some features of American maternal speech could not be generalized to include other societies.

However, Snow (1976) showed that the speech of Dutch mothers to their 2-year-olds consisted of the same characteristics of redundancy and simplicity found in other languages, such as English. Thus, each language must be studied individually in order to determine the relationship of adult-to-adult and adult-to-child language.

Sachs, Brown, and Salerno (1976) studied the speech of adults to children in order to discover if there are certain characteristics that help the child in discovering the structure of language. The study involved a storytelling task to a 22-month-old girl whose vocabulary consisted of approximately thirty words. Adults who were relatively inexperienced in talking with children were taped during this task, and then the tapes were analyzed for rate of speech, number of sentences, use of past tense and type of sentence. This analysis showed that adults speaking to young children spoke slower, used more sentences over a given time period, and used more interrogatives, but less complex sentences. There was no difference in the use of past tense and simple declaratives. The experimenters proposed that "adults change their speech to match their expectations of the listener's abilities to comprehend." (1976:243). Therefore, the adults'

speech modification is affected by the child's communicative abilities.

Talking to Chidren edited by Snow and Ferguson (1977) grew out of a conference organized to bring together "linguists who had been studying baby talk as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, psychologists who had been studying speech to children as a factor in language acquisition, and anthropologists who had been comparing mother-child interaction across several cultures." (1977:vii).

The first chapter written by Snow describes mothers' speech to children. She includes several of the same characteristics mentioned by Sachs et al (1976). In addition, Snow noted that maternal speech has few disfluencies, is pitched higher, and has an exaggerated intonation pattern. After reviewing several studies of mothers' speech in different situations, Snow pointed out that task difficulty has little effect, but that typeof activity has a large effect on mothers' speech. In free situations (playing, reading a book) mothers' speech was more complex than in caretaking situations (dressing, bathing, and eating). Snow suggests that the "need to communicate efficiently produces simpler speech in the caretaking situations." (1977:37). In addition, Snow stated that the maternal speech consisted of "specified adjustments to the child, cued by what he says and tries to say as much as by his attentiveness and comprehension." (1977:49). Therefore, Snow definitely supports the idea of children affecting adult speech.

Sachs (1977) contributed a chapter to Talking to Children entitled "Adaptive Significance of Input to Infants." She suggested that "in the infant's productions, the first aspects of language that he controls are the very ones that are prominent in the speech of the caregiver to him." (1977:61). Although a young infant cannot talk, he, nevertheless, exerts influence on his caregiver's speech.

In chapter three, Garnica (1977) compares prosodic characteristics in adult speech to young children, ages two and five, and found that many of the character-

istics concerning the two-year-olds did not hold true for the five-year-olds. For example, adults used a higher pitch when talking to 2-year-olds, but not when talking to 5-year-olds. Also, adults did not use whispering or longer duration of verbs with the 5-year-olds. The adults believed that some of these mentioned characteristics helped make their communication with the child more effective. Thus, the adults were influenced by the child's communicative abilities.

Shatz and Gelman (1977) introduce some interesting ideas in the chapter they contributed entitled "Beyond Syntax: The Influence of Conversational Constraints on Speech Modifications." As previously mentioned, adults use many short utterances with young children rather than longer, more complex sentences. Shatz and Gelman suggest that this may be a way that adults deal with children's short attention span, as well as, with their linguistic inadequacies. "A speaker's understanding of the context-sensitive constraints operating on conversational interaction governs his or her speech adjustments." (1977:189). Shatz and Gelman supported this statement by noting that 4-year-olds talked more simply to 2-year-olds than to adults. Therefore, Shatz and Gelman noted modifications of adult language because of the child's attention span and his linguistic capabilities. In addition, adults modify their speech because of children's "general cognitive immaturity, which influences what is said to them, as well as how things are said." (1977:197).

Gleason (1977) in chapter eight discusses how "children help shape the language behavior of those who speak to them by the kind of feedback they produce" (1977:204). For example, repetitions in mothers' language may be prompted by behavioral responses of the child. The child may not have learned to give the adult appropriate feedback, "the little nods, grunts, and other signals that

indicate that the message has been received and that it is all right to continue" (1977:200-201). In fact, Gleason observed that repetition most often occurred when the child failed to look after the mother spoke. Perhaps, unconsciously, the adults "appear to be 'tuned in' to children and to be sensitive to even small changes in children's capacities as they develop, a sensitivity that is reflected in the adults' speech" (1977:205). Similarly to some of the previously reviewed articles, Gleason also listed several characteristics of maternal speech to children, but she noted that non-mothers, fathers, and older children produced many of these same modifications. In conclusion, Gleason presents many interesting aspects of the importance of children's feedback in modifying adult language.

In chapter thirteen, "Ethnography and Caretaker-Child Interaction," Blount (1977) discussed the insufficient amount of cross-cultural studies concerning caretaker speech to children and the need for more studies in order to compare the different speech communities. Blount presented a couple of studies dealing with other speech communities. He discussed how Japanese mothers tended to use "more non-verbal communication, to be more favorably disposed toward use of baby talk, and to be more tolerant in assigning meaning to deviant utterances of the children" (1977:304).

Bell and Harper (1977) edited a book entitled Child Effects on Adults in which they covered in one section ancient, medieval, and modern time periods. In this part, the child's status and way of life were discussed. The effect of the child on adult language received little attention in these chapters. In the first chapter, French (1977) begins to approach this topic when she discusses how the helplessness of an infant impressed the Greeks. "Plato considers at some length how speechless infants can still manage to communicate some of their wants" (1977:14). In chapter eleven Harper (1977) states that there are numerous reports that

parental speech is affected by gender, age, presence, verbal competence, and cognitive ability (1977:200), but he fails to elaborate on any of these studies. Therefore, this book discusses many ways that the child affects the adult, but child effects on adult language were inferred but not discussed.

When examining the popular and semi-popular literature destined for parents and caregivers it is revealing that there is an abundance of materials on how to interact with children but none develops the idea that children, in their turn, influence their caretakers. A local department store, for example, offered a parental involvement program to make the parents more effective in developing a child's self image, good attitudes, skills and understandings during the formative preschool years. No part of the advertisement made reference to how children affect adult language.

In addition, the Jossey-Bass Social and Behavioral Science Series is offering four new books covering several different aspects concerning children. Again, the effect of children on adult language is not included in any of these books.

Lastly, in the recent issues of Parent Magazine no articles cover the effect of children on adult language. Althcugh this topic has become an important research area in speech, it has not yet been included in many areas such as popular parent magazines or parent programs.

PART II: NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

The study of the physical movements between the child and his caregiver as part of the conversational interaction have been studied only recently. It is astonishing that the touching behavior between mothers or caretakers and toddlers is covered in the literature, but that in these studies no distinction is made between communication by language and purely affective and playful interaction. The early researchers did not distinguish between message related movements and nondiscoursive body motions. Obviously, all movements of the body are culture-bound, to some extent, as children imitate their elders in the way they walk, in socially acceptable courtship patterns, eating rituals, smiles and laughter. Socialization and enculturation begin at birth, not to mention the prenatal interaction of the unborn with his mother (von Raffler-Engel 1964:74-76). The term

kinesics, as opposed to the more inclusive term body language, should best be reserved for message-related body movements, movements, that is, which are accompanying or substituting for verbal utterances.

In 1975, during the IIIrd International Symposium on Child Language, the formation of a cross-cultural archive to observe kinesic development in the child was officially announced (von Raffler-Engel 1975), but work on this project is progressing at an extremely slow pace. One of the major difficulties in such cross-cultural research is the complication and the price ($165) of the conversion of videotapes from different standards. The very concept of a maturational development for kinesic behavior did not exist before 1974 and what constitutes the maturational curve in developmental kinesics remains largely to be explored (von Raffler-Engel 1976). Currently research on the subject is conducted by Edna Shaw in Australia and Takeo Ishi in Japan.

During the past four years, von Raffler-Engel has researched the non-verbal behavior of adults in relation to children (von Raffler-Engel, in press). The findings are unequivocal. Adults adjust to the chronological and intellectual age of the child, to his sex, and to his socio-economic status. The implications of these findings are becoming increasingly clearer as more and more research accumulates, but it will still require a considerably larger data base before we can fully evaluate the effect of the child on his adult conversation partner. Eventually there is feedback factor which entails that the child influences the adult whose conditioned behavior, in turn, influences the child in a continuous circularity of reciprocal interaction.

It is not that psychologists, educators and pediatricians have overlooked the fact that mothers adapt to their children. Brazelton (1969) illustrates the instinctive response of the mother to pick up and cuddle her child when he pleads for it. The mutual gazing behavior of infants and their caretakers has been covered by various authors. Bullowa (1975) pioneered the analysis of the reci-

procity of bodily movements between mother and baby in face-to-face interaction. The first book dealing with the impact of the infant on his adult partner in the dyadic interaction is the one by Lewis and Rosenblum of 1974, which was mentioned earlier in this paper. These studies concentrate on neonatal behavior in humans and animals. This collection of articles contains some very important observations on the mother-child dyad and furnished extensive documentation on the physical movements that go on during their face-to-face interaction. Particularly noteworthy is the statement by Brazelton et al (1974:68) that "Most mothers, in sum, are unwilling or unable to deal with neonatal behaviors as though they are meaningless or unintentional. Instead, they endow the smallest movements with highly personal meaning and react to them affectively. They insist on joining in and enlarging on even the least possible interactive behaviors, through imitation. As they perform as if highly significant interaction has taken place when there has been no action at all." One may not be fully in agreement that mothers endow with meaning what is meaningless and believe that infants purposely communicate from the very beginning of life (von Raffler-Engel 1964), but this is beyond the point. Brazelton et al (1974:75) have also observed that it is through this interaction that the infant "learns many rules--about his environment and about himself. As he learns how to interact with and master his own physiological needs, he frees himself to attend to his external world." Most importantly Brazelton et al (1974:74) say that the mother "uses her periods of interaction to 'model' the baby to become more and more complex. She times the complexity of her models to his stage of development." The authors thus acknowledge the teaching function of the maternal adaptation.

After analyzing how the adult adjusts--literally, caters--to the communicative style of the individual child, it appeares that the adult behavior serves

two distinct functions. One is the well known function of mother's language to be intelligible to the child according to his powers of perception and cognition. Recently, Gleason et al (1977) has researched father's language and discovered that it has the definite function of being considerably more difficult to understand than mother's language. Fatherese serves as a language of transition between the ease of motherese and the difficulties and the uncooperativeness of the outside world.

In addition to this first function which is geared to language perception, the adjustment of the adult to the child also fulfills a second function geared to language production. The adult behavior, verbal and non-verbal, is also intended to serve as a model for the child. Adult behavior demonstrates to the child what aspects of his language and his culture he is likely to be capable of performing himself. A three year old is not expected to construct sentences with three or four embeddings, or to sit still for an extended period of time (von Raffler-Engel, in press). As Blount and Kempton (1976) phrase it, "Parents are confronted with the task of communicating with individuals who do not know what the fundamentals of interaction are.... Parents also use features to focus attention...and they use those features over and over to teach the children to attend to speech."

In nonverbal behavior, the teaching function of the adult is best seen with toddlers. The child is small enough so that it is not yet well socialized and big enough to be able to make all the necessary body movements. Kinesically, small children of all cultures tend to make use of self-centered (distractive, nonconforming) attention-getting devices. Older children appear to favor the other-centered (cooperative, conforming) attention getting device which is the rule for adults. The small child is also unaware of the requirements of kinesic synchrony,

an automatic conformity of posture and hand and foot position within a group of interactants (von Raffler-Engel 1976a).

In addition to the forms of language, children also learn the use of language. As pointed out by DeStefano (1972), standard adult register repertoires are larger and contain registers not included in a child's repertoire. The same holds true for the repertoires of nonverbal behavior.

Like verbal language, the acquisition of kinesics is a synthesis of innate features and environmental factors (von Raffler-Engel 1964). All children appear to make extensive use of descriptive gestures. Japanese and English children, eventually, are socialized into the suppression of most hand gestures. Italian children will have to learn the meaning and appropriate use of a variety of semiotic gestures.

The first outcome of a joint Japan-U. S. A. research between Professor Peng in Tokyo and Prof. von Raffler-Engel in Nashville, Tennessee, is a videotape of a Japanese girl, age 2 years and 3 months, in conversation with the caretaker, at play, and talking over a toy telephone (Peng 1975).

On the tape one can see the little girl, Naomi, playing with a toy animal, holding it in her arms and dancing around her mother. The child has a joyful, careless expression, hopping around like any two-year old in the world.

Eventually, the mother takes the toy kangaroo away from the child. Mother and daughter are cooperative in a joyful and highly civilized manner. Naomi hands the toy animal to her mother, who holds it straight in her hands and bends it down to that the kangaroo makes a polite bow of leave taking.

On another part of the tape Naomi speaks over a toy telephone. She enjoys the play conversation, bows when greeting her imaginary telephone partner, holds a conversation with him, and finally bows to say goodbye.

When mothers speak to their little children, they use short sentences and simple illustrators. The games they play with them, too, are verbal and non-verbal. Verbally, children listen to nursery rhymes and little ditties that accompany finger games, like patty cake.

On the tape we see Naomi's mother demonstrating playful hand and finger movements to the child, who repeats them, executes them jointly with her mother, and eventually the two play an interacting game.

In his conversational interaction with his mother and other adults or older siblings and their peers, the child learns how to behave verbally and non-verbally. The adult does not only adjust to the child's communicative powers in order to make himself intelligible to the child, he also acts as a model that can be imitated within the expressive powers of the child. This applies to the non-verbal, as well as the verbal, aspects of communicative behavior.

An experiment was performed in 1974 (von Raffler-Engel 1976b) where an adult told a story to 30 children, ages three to fifteen. Among all the inter-connected variables, the child's age proved an extremely significant factor in determining the reaction of the adult. Basically, the children fell into three groups: the small children, ages three to seven years; the preadolescents, ages eight to eleven years; and the teenagers, from thirteen to fifteen years.

With the small children, the storyteller was primarily intent on keeping their attention. These children have not yet been socialized into the rules for propriety in a formal setting and during the story telling sessions they tended to squirm on the sofa. The children frequently came into body contact with the acult, and the adult extended touching movements towards them. Whole body movements were more frequent here than when interacting with older children. Eye contact is almost constant between child and adult. For back channeling response the adult tried to elicit smiles and laughter. The adult spoke in a higher pitch

throughout the session. In telling the story the adult changed her voice more frequently than with the other groups of children to indicate the roles of the characters. She also had more extremes of pitch than with the older children. In this group her phonation ratio was lowest.

Consequently, within the youngest group of children, there were the fewest occurances of illustrators. The small children liked to sit close to the adult, leaving little room to her hand for illustrating motions. The time for illustrators was also curtailed because her hands were busy touching the child. The children hopped around and the adult repeated several lexical items in a rhythmic fashion. These vocabulary repetitions were accompanied by equally rhythmic head nods.

With the preadolescent group the adult had the greatest amount of illustrators. The children were involved in the story and their comments elicited further illustrators from the story teller. The children themselves used ideographs and deictic movements.

The adult's behavior with the teenagers had two distinct parts. Two adolescent girls sat with her on the sofa and one sat on a sidechair. All three girls were extremely quiet kinesically. The adult reciprocated their sedate behavior. In her story telling the sentences were long and phonation ratio was high. Her choice of lexicon included typical teenage words like cool and dude. Her gesticulation was subdued, giving a sense of formal politeness. The girls' facial expression was blase and their posture very stiff. They seemed to signal to the adult that they wanted to be treated as peer and not to be confused with the "children" that had been with them in the waiting room. Later, the storyteller reflected that she had the distinct feeling of being at a tea party.

At a certain moment, however, she remembered that she was not telling fairy tales to the girls to entertain them, but so that they could eventually retell them to little children. She suddenly became kinesically active and made use of illustrators so that the hearers could follow her example when it would be their turn to act as speakers.

There was complete inter-rater agreement that the behavior of the adult storyteller was determined by the children. The storyteller herself had not been conscious of this fact at all, but when she became aware of it during our discussion of the tapes, she started talking about her reaction to the children and concentrated on introspection. She realized that she had, indeed, waited for cues from the children before organizing her behavior. She recalled most vividly how puzzled she was when one child acted in a totally unexpected manner. One eight-year-old boy looked younger than his age because of his small size, but was intellectually far beyond his chronological age. His behavior violated the adult's expectancies and, as she put it, "threw her off guard." She "tried to gain time." Verbally, she made extensive use of pauses, self-prodding buffers, and back channel elicitors. Non-verbally, she adjusted her posture over and over again on the couch. All the while she was watching the youngster's behavior from the corner of her eye.

Given the age of the child, the adult has certain expectancies. Where the frustration of adult expectancies is common is when adult and child do not share the same social background and the adult is not knowledgeable about the conversational style into which the child has been socialized or, worse, is not even aware of the fact that such differences exist.

It is apparent that the adult's behavior is conditioned by the behavior of the child. If the adult is uncertain he elicits back channel responses from the child in order to adjust his behavior accordingly. The adult-child interaction is in many ways similar to the psychiatric interview or to the professor-student relationship. In all these instances the power situation is multi-faceted. Both conversation partners are dominant, but not in the same areas.

The analysis of the adult-child interaction in the face-to-face situation

suggests that the adult adjusts to the child for the double purpose of being understood and imitated by the child, although he is not necessarily conscious of this double purpose.

The significance of this type of research lies in the possibility of identifying the type of adult behavior which is conducive to the development of a strong communicative competence in the normal child. When interacting with a retarded child, the adult finds many of his expectancies frustrated. If these normal adult expectancies can be identified, it may become possible to generate adequate expectancies for interacting with the retarded. With the hearing impaired, non-verbal behavior may assume particular importance.

Women seem to be more cognizant of the fact that adults adjust to the child. In an informal survey consisting of six male and six female college students, Rea (1978) asked the following question: "Do you think that children influence adult speech?" All the females replied positively and said that adults employ baby talk when speaking to infants and young children. However, the male subjects' replies were more diverse, since only three of the six said that adults use baby talk. Two of the males said that adults do not use profanity around children, while the other male replied that children have no effect on adult language. One of the male subjects who said that adults use baby talk referred to a cartoon in a magazine that proposed the difficulty of children learning to talk since the child so often hears phrases such as "bow wow" and "choo choo."

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